Bourgeois-Liberal and Feminist Associations in the Twilight of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy

Dóra Fedeles-Czeferner

In this paper, I present the development of the three most significant bourgeois-liberal feminist associations in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. I argue that before 1918, these organisations promoted women's political agency according to similar principles and had direct and indirect connections with each other. There is considerable overlap among them regarding their aims, working methods, press activity, and membership composition. I also demonstrate that the associations' communication strategies were almost identical. Furthermore, I show how successful the three organisations were in convincing their female supporters to join them and fight for women's equality.[1]

In the wide range of bourgeois women's organisations, the associations studied were distinguished from the other groups mainly by their left-wing progressive and sometimes even radical stance. Organised on a modern basis, they rejected the principles of the traditional women's associations of the early and mid-19th century. They pursued a variety of goals related to women's political, economic, and social emancipation. Regarding Austria, I focus on the *Allgemeiner Österreichischer Frauenverein* (General Austrian Women's Association), established in Vienna in 1893 and active until 1922. In the case of Hungary, my emphasis is on the *Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete* (National Association of Female Clerks) and the *Feministák Egyesülete* (Feminists' Association). Several overlaps can be identified in the Hungarian associations in terms of their membership, their boards, and even their leaders. The *National Association of Female Clerks* was founded in 1896 but did not survive the period of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (Republic of Councils, 21 March

1 This research is part of a larger project in which I analysed the history and press activity of these organisations between 1893 and 1918. For the initial results, see Czeferner, Dóra: Kultúrmisszió vagy propaganda? Feminista lapok és olvasóik Bécsben és Budapesten [Cultural Mission or Propaganda? Feminist Journals and their Readers in Vienna and Budapest], Budapest 2021; Fedeles-Czeferner, Dóra: Nőmozgalom, nemzetköziség, önreprezentáció. Feministák az Osztrák–Magyar Monarchia alkonyán [Women's movement, internationalism, self-representation. Feminists in the twilight of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy], Pécs 2023; Dóra Fedeles-Czeferner: Progressive Women's Movements in Austria and Hungary. Conflict, Cooperation, Circulation, Bloomington 2025.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

1919–1 August 1919). In contrast, the *Feminists' Association*, created in 1904, was able to reinvent itself during the regime changes of 1918–1919. It played a role in defending women's rights until the end of 1949.

The broader framework for the activities of the three associations was the international women's movement, which was in the process of being established during the period under study. Three international organisations should be mentioned here. The *International Council of Women* (1888–, Washington, D.C.) was the first women's rights organisation to pursue women's emancipation across national borders. Austria joined the organisation in 1903, followed by Hungary in 1904. A few years later, the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance* (1904–present, Berlin) was founded as the first supranational organisation to advocate for women's suffrage. Both Austria and Hungary became full members of this organisation in 1906. The leaders of these international organisations were not only in constant correspondence but also met regularly. These meetings were framed by their biannual international congresses, which also brought Austrian and Hungarian women activists into closer contact.

As the official Hungarian auxiliary of the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance*, the *Feminists' Association* was much more involved in the international movement than the *National Association of Female Clerks* and the *General Austrian Women's Association* before 1914. In addition, a third international organisation should be mentioned here, namely the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* (1915–, The Hague), which was formed with the aim of uniting women worldwide to resist war, oppression, and exploitation. Board members of the *General Austrian Women's Association* and the *Feminists' Association* both took a leading role in organising and running this organisation, bringing them even closer together.

This paper's main protagonists are Rosika Schwimmer (1877, Budapest–1948, New York), president of the *National Association of Female Clerks*, later head of the Political Committee of the *Feminists' Association*, and leading figure not only of the Hungarian but also of the international women's and peace movements,[2] Vilma Glücklich (1872, Vágújhely [today Nové Mesto nad Váhom, Slovakia]–1927, Vienna), president of the *Feminists' As-*

2 Journalist, feminist, and pacifist. As a young bookkeeper, she participated in the establishment of the National Association of Female Clerks, where she served as president until 1908. After 1904, she played a leading role in the *Feminists' Association*. Beginning in the early 1900s, she was firmly established in the transnational women's movements. In 1913, she was elected press secretary of the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance*. Zimmermann, Susan/Major, Borbála: Róza Schwimmer, in: Francisca de Haan/Krassimira Daskalova/Anna Loutfi (eds.), A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminism. Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe. 19th and 20th Centuries, Budapest 2006, pp. 484–491.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

sociation,[3] and Auguste Fickert (1855, Vienna–1910, Maria Enzersdorf, Austria), founder and leader of the *General Austrian Women's Association* until her death.[4]

The subject has been understudied thus far. Regarding its historiography, the following details are worth highlighting: Harriet Anderson, Birgitta Bader-Zaar, Renate Flich, and Hanna Hacker have researched parts of the history of the *General Austrian Women's Association*, while Judith Szapor and Susan Zimmermann have examined particular aspects of the development of the *Feminists' Association* and the *National Association of Female Clerks*.[5] I relied on the organisational documentation and the official bodies of the three organisations[6] as well as on the personal collections of the three women mentioned above. I collected archival sources from the Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek) and the Vienna Library (Wienbibliothek im Rathaus), the Hungarian National Archives, the National Széchényi Library, and the New York Public Library.

---

3 Teacher, journalist, feminist, pacifist, and editor of the first official organ of the *Feminists' Association* and the *National Association of Female Clerks*, titled *A Nő és a Társadalom* (Woman and Society, Budapest, 1917–1913). She was the first woman to receive a degree from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Budapest and was the president of the *Feminists' Association* until her death. Between 1922 and 1925, she took a leading role in the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* (1915–, The Hague) in Geneva. Zimmermann, Susan: Vilma Glücklich, in: Francisca de Haan/Krassimira Daskalova/Anna Loutfi (eds.), A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminism. Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe. 19th and 20th Centuries, Budapest 2006, pp. 162–166.

4 Teacher, journalist, editor of the official organ of the *General Austrian Women's Association*, titled *Neues Frauenleben* (New Women's Life, Vienna, 1902–1918), pacifist. In addition to leading the *Allgemeiner Österreichischer Frauenverein*, she cooperated with proletarian organisations and took an active role in education campaigns and legal protection for working-class women. Hacker, Hanna: Fickert, Auguste (1855–1910), in: Francisca de Haan/Krassimira Daskalova/Anna Loutfi (eds.), A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms. Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe. 19th and 20th Centuries, Budapest 2006, pp. 131–134. Fickert's estate in the Vienna Library comprises 1,857 inventory numbers.

5 Anderson, Harriet: Utopian Feminism. Women's Movements in "fin-de-siècle" Vienna, New Haven 1992; Anderson, Harriet: Vision und Leidenschaft. Die Frauenbewegung im Fin de Siècle Wiens, Wien 1994; Bader-Zaar, Birgitta: Die Wiener Frauenbewegung und der Rechtschutz für Frauen, 1895–1914, in: Thomas Angerer/Gerald Stourzh (eds.), Geschichte und Recht. Festschrift für Gerald Stourzh zum 70. Geburtstag, Wien 1999, pp. 365–383; Flich, Renate: Der Fall Auguste Fickert – eine Lehrerin macht Schlagzeilen, in: Wiener Geschichtsblätter 45 (1990), pp. 1–24; Flich, Renate: Auguste Fickert: „rote" Lehrerin und radikal bürgerliche Feministin?, in: Doris Ingrisch (ed.), Die Revolutionierung des Alltags. Zur intellektuellen Kultur von Frauen im Wien der Zwischenkriegszeit, Frankfurt a.M./Wien 2004, pp. 43–55; Hacker, Hanna: Zeremonien der Verdrängung. Konfliktmuster in der bürgerlichen Frauenbewegung um 1900, in: Lisa Fischer (ed.), Die Frauen der Wiener Moderne, München 1997, pp. 101–109; Hacker, Hanna: Gewalt ist: keine Frau. Der Akteurin oder eine Geschichte der Transgression, Königstein 1998; Szapor, Judith: Hungarian Women's Activism in the Wake of the First World War. From Rights to Revanche, London 2018; Zimmermann, Susan: Die bessere Hälfte? Frauenbewegungen und Frauenbestrebungen im Ungarn der Habsburgermonarchie 1848 bis 1918, Wien 1999; Zimmermann, Susan: Frauenbewegungen und Frauenbestrebungen im Königreich Ungarn, in: Adam Wandruszka/Helmut Rumpler (eds.), Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918, vol. 8/1, Politische Öffentlichkeit und Zivilgesellschaft. Vereine, Parteien und Interessenverbände als Träger der politischen Partizipation, Wien 2006, pp. 1359–1491.

6 *Dokumente der Frauen* (Documents of Women, Vienna, 1899–1902), *New Women's Life*, *Woman and Society*, and *A Nő. Feminista Folyóirat* (Woman. Feminist Journal, Budapest, 1914–1928).

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

1. Political dimensions and political agency of the organisations

Despite the gradual change in women's situation in society and in the labour market, the idea that men and women had different roles was still prevalent in male-dominated public opinion at the end of the 19th century. On a discursive level, while men responsible for supporting their families were allowed to play an active role in public life, women's role was exclusively to be good wives and mothers. After 1848, Austrian and Hungarian women began to redefine the boundaries between these sharply divided male and female spheres and took the first steps towards their politicisation.

In the theoretical literature, the period from the second half of the 19th century until the outbreak of World War I in Austria and Hungary, in line with trends in Western Europe, is considered a golden age for civic activities to establish and run associations. The state did not always support every initiative. For example, in § 30 of the Austrian *Vereinsgesetz*, the Law on Associations passed in 1867, made it difficult for women's groups to garner support for a political objective until 1918.[7] Theoretically, women were not supposed to be politically active during this period; they were even considered incapable of political engagement. However, along with other women's groups such as the *Verein der Lehrerinnen und Erzieherinnen* (Association of Women Teachers and Educators, 1870–1938, Vienna), the *General Austrian Women's Association* demonstrates that women did, in fact, participate in various political activities, which is considered a paradox today. The explanation for this paradox is that the fight of the *General Austrian Women's Association* for women's emancipation is seen as political today, whereas its contemporaries judged it according to a moral framework.[8]

Regarding individualisation and self-organisation in Hungary, "no legislative steps were taken on the freedom of organisation and on citizens' rights of association and assembly" either immediately before or after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. While the authorities obstructed the activities of movements of social groups seen as "dangerous", such as those of ethnic groups that questioned the legality of the dualist state system, "unrestricted opportunity arose for activity in culture, entertainment, and social thought to blossom".[9] An edict in 1875, however, also banned associations in Hungary from expressing explicit political opinions.

Before the 1890s, women's organisations focused mainly on charitable work in both halves of the Dual Monarchy.[10] By the last decade of the century, an increasing number of newly founded and well-established groups had raised their voices for women's rights in

7 Gesetz vom 15. November 1867 (RGBl. Nr. 134/1867).

8 Judson, Pieter: Die unpolitische Bürgerin im politisierenden Verein. Zu einigen Paradoxa des bürgerlichen Weltbildes im 19. Jahrhundert, in: Ernst Bruckmüller/Hans Heiss/Hannes Stekl/Peter Urbanitsch (eds.), Durch Arbeit, Besitz, Wissen und Gerechtigkeit. Bürgertum in der Habsburgermonarchie, Wien/Köln/Weimar 1992, pp. 337–345.

9 Translated by the author. Gyáni, Gábor: Individualizálódás és civil társadalom. Történeti érvek, elméleti megfontolások [Individualisation and civil society. Historical arguments, theoretical considerations], in: Történelmi Szemle 52 (2010), pp. 485–495.

10 Zimmermann, Susan: Frauenbestrebungen und Frauenbewegungen in Ungarn, in: Beáta Nagy/Margit S. Sárdi (eds.), Szerep és alkotás. Női szerepek a társadalomban és az alkotóművészetben [Role and Creativity. Female Roles in Society and Art], Debrecen 1997, pp. 171–204.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

the family, in education, and in the labour market. They rejected the principles of traditional women's organisations and, instead of doing charity work, sought to help women through more practical means. They also provided learning opportunities for women to make their voices heard in public on issues affecting the interests of their own gender before they had the right to vote.

By the 1890s, the three branches of the women's movement had become clearly defined. In addition to charitable and emerging Christian socialist groups, social democratic (proletarian working women's) associations also began to emerge. The third branch is formed by bourgeois organisations, both conservative and progressive (the latter is sometimes framed as radical). The *General Austrian Women's Association*, the *National Association of Female Clerks*, and the *Feminists' Association* belong to the latter group. Groups belonging to the radical wing of the third branch sharply criticised male privilege and women's lack of political rights.[11] Their aim was by no means only to criticise men; instead, they wanted to find constructive solutions to unresolved social problems that affected women and society as a whole.

The associations examined in this paper used their public events and official bodies to promote women's political agency. Social democratic and Christian social organisations accused these associations of fighting only for (upper) middle-class women and of only theoretically fighting for women's rights. In the meantime, the social democratic women's associations organised vocal demonstrations, while Christian social groups tried to solve the problem of domestic servants through practical help. The living and working conditions of domestic servants were one of the major social problems of the period, both in Austria and Hungary. At the same time, women's associations condemned women's employment in the modern sectors of the economy, i.e. the service sector. Thus, the bourgeois-liberal, feminist, and social democratic women's associations considered the campaigns of the Christian socialist women's associations a "symptomatic treatment" rather than a "cure for the real disease".[12]

Before 1914, activities promoting women's emancipation were concentrated in the two capital cities of the Dual Monarchy. In terms of geographical location, it can be noted that while all the leading figures of the Austrian women's movement were born in Vienna, the driving forces of the women's movement immigrated to Budapest as children or young adults.[13] Vienna, under the leadership of the Christian socialist politician Karl Lueger (1844, Vienna–1910, Vienna; mayor from 1897–1910), was by no means an idyllic environment for a progressive women's association that sought to promote political agency and the active political participation of women. The *General Austrian Women's Association* was fighting against Lueger's party and the Christian Socialist Party, as well as

11 In Austrian academic literature, the term "feminist" (*feministisch*) is rarely used in connection with the historical women's movement, as these associations did not use this term to refer to themselves. The *Feminists' Association* was one of the few women's associations – both within the monarchy and on the international stage – that was proud to wear the feminist badge.

12 Translated by the author. Fedeles-Czeferner: Nőmozgalom, nemzetköziség, önreprezentáció, pp. 68–83.

13 Cf. Szapor: Hungarian Women's Activism in the Wake of the First World War, p. 11.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

against the *Christian Social Women's Associations*. They constantly criticised them in their periodicals and at the public events they organised.

On the other hand, the Hungarian associations gained the support of the Budapest city administration towards the end of the 1900s. In his function as mayor of the capital, István Bárczy (1866, Pest–1943, Budapest; mayor from 1906–1919), a member of the National Democratic Civil Party, contributed considerable sums to the operation of these associations. The contrasting environment in Vienna and the supportive milieu in Budapest may even explain some differences between the working strategies of the Austrian and Hungarian groups. At this point, it must be emphasised that neither the Austrian nor the Hungarian associations were (publicly) committed to any political party, which, in practice, meant that they stood by all political groups that supported their aims.

2. Structure of the organisations

In this section, I reconstruct the establishment and structure of the Austrian and Hungarian organisations and highlight the main similarities and differences between them. I show that the progressive women's movement in Hungary and Budapest began to develop later than in Vienna. I argue that the work of the *General Austrian Women's Association* in Vienna had a seminal influence on the development in Budapest through the indirect and direct contacts of the (leading) members of the Austrian association, the *National Association of Female Clerks* and the *Feminists' Association*. Thus, I argue that the Hungarian associations largely followed the path set by the *General Austrian Women's Association* in Vienna, but after a while adopted different objectives and strategies to achieve their goals. The leaders of the three organisations are credited with laying the new foundations of the bourgeois women's movement in Austria and Hungary. They demanded equal rights for women in all areas of life (family, education, labour market and politics). From the outset, their feminism was based on the idea of equality, which they emphasised in every forum.

Born into the intellectual ferment of fin-de-siècle Vienna, the *General Austrian Women's Association* (AÖF) began its work in a progressive milieu. The organisation of female teachers played an important role in its foundation. In this context, I will discuss below the turning points in the three-year process of its organisation. After almost three years of preparation, the celebratory first session of the *General Austrian Women's Association* was convened on 28 January 1893 in Vienna's Old Town Hall. Although the profiles and aims of the Austrian and the two Hungarian associations were similar, they differed in their methods of leadership and management.[14] Like the (vice) presidents of the *National Association of Female Clerks* and *Feminists' Association*, the (vice) president of the Austrian organisation, Auguste Fickert, remained in high-level organisational functions until her death. But unlike the practice of the Budapest groups, the positions of president and vice president in Vienna were filled (or left empty) with little or no logic or intention. In the minutes of the inaugural meeting of the *General Austrian Women's*

14 Cf. Schwartz, Agatha: Shifting Voices. Feminist Thought and Women's Writing in fin-de-siècle Austria and Hungary, Ottawa 2008, pp. 11–16.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

Association, there are no written rules for the nomination of committee members and presidents.[15]

In what follows, I will argue that while the organisation of the *National Association of Female Clerks* was a spontaneous response by a group of female office workers to solve problems in their workplaces, the *Feminists' Association* was largely founded as an international initiative. Several women (and men) were actively involved in the founding and in the operation of both associations, while some were also involved in the activities of other women's organisations, sometimes even linked to a completely different branch of the women's movement. However, this was quite normal for the period. The *National Association of Female Clerks* was established in 1896 in Budapest under the leadership of Gizella Bíró, née Kaiser, the first qualified female teacher of stenography in Hungary. The element of spontaneity was important in the foundation of the association. A small group of female office workers tried to come up with meaningful responses to the problems of the profession and the failure of the state to address the lack of vocational training for female clerks and their exploitation in the workplace. Until May 1908, it was Rosika Schwimmer who formally led the organisation but from 1906–1907 it was primarily "Janka Grossmann [who in 1909 magyarised her name to Gergely] who directed the association's affairs, while our president visited a number of sister societies, like those in Vienna, Cologne, and Berlin, all of which we were already in constant friendly contact with".[16]

The *Feminists' Association*, established in December 1904,[17] had a different founding story. The need for its formation was expressed at the international level of the women's movement, with the initiative of the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance* as the driving force. The leader of the Dutch progressive women's movement and Schwimmer's mentor and friend, Aletta Jacobs (1854, Sappemeer, Netherlands–1929, Baarn, Netherlands), had developed the idea in 1902. At first, she was still thinking in terms of a joint Austro-Hungarian umbrella organisation: "But can't the Hungarian associations join Marianne Hainisch in Vienna and form an Aust[ro]-Hung[arian] Federation? Marianne Hainisch has already brought together 13 large associations."[18] Jacobs was referring to the *Bund Österreichischer Frauenvereine* (Federation of Austrian Women's Associations 1902–, Vienna) as the umbrella organisation of the Austrian bourgeois women's associations led by Marianne Hainisch (1839, Baden bei Wien–1936, Vienna), who is remembered as the founder of the modern Austrian women's movement.

As for the *Feminists' Association*, Rosika Schwimmer wanted to see Vilma Glücklich as executive president in 1904 but was aware Glücklich would not accept the nomination. In order to avoid this rejection, she scheduled the first committee meeting so that Glücklich's school commitments would prevent her from attending. Thus, Glücklich was

15 [Anonymous]: Stenographisches Protokoll über die Constituierende Versammlung des Allgemeinen Österreichischen Frauenvereines, Wien 1893.

16 New York Public Library Manuscript and Archives Division (NYPL), MssCol 6398. Rosika Schwimmer Papers. Series I. Box 10–11. (Hereinafter: NYPL RSP I.)

17 Letter from Auguszta Rosenberg to Rosika Schwimmer. 4 December 1904. NYPL RSP I. Box 6.

18 Translated by the author. Letter from Aletta Jacobs to Rosika Schwimmer, 1 August 1902. NYPL, MssCol 6398, RSP I. Box 5.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

elected without her knowledge as the leader at that meeting. She served as president almost until her death in 1927.[19] The mild-mannered, hard-working Glücklich, who, apart from Hungarian, spoke fluent German, English, French, and Italian and who dedicated her life to her calling as a teacher and to social administration, soon became a valued figure in the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance* as well. Her personal and professional relationship with Schwimmer was excellent and developed into a lifelong friendship.[20]

The Hungarian associations were much more pragmatic in the election of their leaders than the *General Austrian Women's Association*. Indeed, they did not leave the positions of board members vacant after they had resigned or passed away. Within the *General Austrian Women's Association*, Fickert continued behaving like a teacher in school: she did not accept dissenting opinions and some of her actions were described as "tyrannical" by her fellow members, who otherwise held her in high esteem.[21] As long as she lived, Fickert remained strictly formal, reserved, and even downright cold towards other board members of the association, such as Leopoldine Kulka (1872, Vienna–1920, Vienna), Adele Gerber (1863, Vienna–1937, Vienna), and Christine Touaillon (1878, Jihlava, Bohemia–1928, Graz).

However, by the end of her life, Fickert had perfectly honed her leadership strategy to bring women onto the *General Austrian Women's Association* committee who were much younger than she was, single, and, if possible, without Jewish roots. It is ironic that of the so-called "Fickert epigons", who were treated as her "disciples" (*Schülerinnen*), Leopoldine Kulka, a non-observant member of a Jewish family, somehow stood out. In 1911, she was elected vice president of the association and remained in this position until she died in 1920.[22] What happened after 1910, then, was precisely what Fickert, according to her life partner Ida Baumann (1845, Schwarzburg-Sondershausen–1913, Greifenstein bei Wien), feared most, namely that her association would fall "into Jewish hands".[23] According to Hanna Hacker, Fickert's relationship with anti-Semitism was highly contradictory. In her own circles, she was at times labelled an anti-Semite, which she herself vehemently protested against. Elisabeth Malleier argues, however, that the issue of Jewish origin was bound to play a role in the context of succession discussions following Fickert's death. Malleier also argues that despite numerous Jewish friends, co-workers and patrons, Fickert had decreed in the years following her passing (1910) that the journal of the General

19 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (MNL OL) [Hungarian National Archives], P999, Box 1, Item 2/a, Remembering Vilma Glücklich.

20 Zimmermann: Vilma Glücklich, pp. 162–166.

21 Hacker: Zeremonien der Verdrängung, pp. 101–109.

22 Wienbibliothek im Rathaus, Nachlass Fickert (WR NF), AC10956995, Leopoldine Kulka, Dokumentation.

23 Translated by the author. Letter from Leopoldine Kulka to Emil Fickert. 23 June 1910. Cited in: Hacker, Hanna: Wer gewinnt? Wer verliert? Wer tritt aus dem Schatten?: Machtkämpfe und Beziehungsstrukturen nach dem Tod der „großen Feministin" Auguste Fickert (1910), in: L'Homme 7/1 (1996), pp. 97–106.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

Women's Association, *Neues Frauenleben*, should not be run by Jewish members of the association.[24]

Fickert's attitude towards leadership differed from those advocated by Janka Gergely, Vilma Glücklich, and Rosika Schwimmer. A much more collegial, even friendly, relationship developed between the members of the Hungarian organisations than within the *General Austrian Women's Association*. The following factors can explain this divergence: Gergely, Schwimmer, and Glücklich – all three coming from Jewish families and with no intention of keeping Jewish women out of the organisation – joined the *National Association of the Female Clerks* and later the *Feminists' Association* at a younger age and with less hardened personalities than Fickert, who was almost 40 when the *General Austrian Women's Association* was founded. Of the three, Glücklich was the most disciplined. Gergely and Schwimmer, who worked as female clerks in their younger years, both had a rhapsodic temperament. The three childless and unmarried women spent considerable time together, even outside the associations, and actively corresponded when they were far apart.

3. The association's objectives

In this section, I discuss the aims of the associations, which covered almost every aspect of women's lives. I show which of their aims were successful and which were not. I also briefly review the objectives of the associations, which have changed little over the decades, and discuss their strategies for achieving their goals.

3.1 The General Austrian Women's Association

While the *General Austrian Women's Association* was far ahead of its time in terms of its objectives, it has to be highlighted that it often lacked the necessary means to achieve them. Without them, the association's activism remained limited in certain areas. However, its achievements, such as the creation of the *Heimhof*, the first centralized household in Vienna, or the struggle for the institutionalisation of women's education rights, were remarkable for the period and received the continued support of several Austrian politicians.

The *General Austrian Women's Association* statutes provide a precise picture of the main aims of the organisation.[25] Furthermore, the minutes of the organisation, as well as the January issues of *New Women's Life*, would repeatedly publish verbatim the association's goals, as set out in 1893, which did not change as the decades passed: "The purpose of the General Austrian Women's Association is to promote the intellectual education and

24 Ibid.; Malleier, Elisabeth: Jüdische Feministinnen in der Wiener bürgerlichen Frauenbewegung vor 1938, in: Margarete Grandner/Edith Saurer (eds.), Geschlecht, Religion und Engagement. Die jüdischen Frauenbewegungen im deutschsprachigen Raum, Wien/Köln/Weimar 2005, pp. 79–122.

25 [Anonymous]: Protokoll, p. 1.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

the economic interests of women, as well as to raise their social status by organising and teaching them orally and in writing".[26]

In the inaugural session, Auguste Fickert sought answers to the question of how the *General Austrian Women's Association* could circumvent § 30 of the Law on Associations. This is worth mentioning because, in all the archival material, I found no other example of her admitting that she was mistaken about any of her projects. With respect to the first Austrian Women's Day, which she organised in 1892 in connection with preparations for the founding of the *General Austrian Women's Association*, she shared the following: "At that time, I was so naive as to believe that within a year […] § 30 of the Law on Associations, which excludes women from membership in political associations, would fall […]. How wrong I was."[27]

There was no obstacle for the *General Austrian Women's Association* to campaign for women's educational and economic rights or to organise lectures on these subjects. In any case, they saw a comprehensive solution to the women's question in attaining "the economic independence of women", for which an adequate (vocational) education would be crucial.[28] For this reason, Fickert, who saw the expansion of institutional women's education as the most important step towards legal equality for women, had already called for action in 1893. She explained that the *General Austrian Women's Association* not only advocated establishing and operating certain types of schools but also demanded a comprehensive revision of the 1869 Primary School Law (*Reichsvolksschulgesetz*) and the opening of all educational institutions to women.[29]

Compared to other women's associations at the time, the radicalism of the *General Austrian Women's Association* was most evident on the issues of domestic servants and prostitution. The members repeatedly stressed the importance of sex education for children, which could have also partially solved the "misery of the maids". They stood up for maternity support and for the reform of marriage laws which were introduced in Western European countries at this time.[30] From the beginning, they pushed for a reform

26 Translated by the author. E.g. AÖF 1913, p. 1.

27 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Protokoll, pp. 8–11.

28 Ibid., p. 12.

29 Ibid., p. 13.

30 After the child protection laws were gradually introduced from the 1850s in Austria, introduction of a maternity allowance as part of the first health insurance law of 1888 was an important measure to support mothers. This did not solve the problem of course. As one of the next important steps, the *Österreichischer Bund für Mutterschutz* (Austrian Federation for Maternity Protection) was established in 1907. The demands for the extension of maternity protection were mostly unsuccessful, as only minor improvements were made to the maternity protection until the First World War. E.g. women who had recently given birth were not allowed to work for the first four weeks after the birth of their child. Until 1891, Hungarian women were not obliged to take maternity leave, nor were they previously entitled to a financial support for this period. Compulsory maternity leave and maternity allowance were only provided by law in 1907, but domestic servants, most of whom were obviously women, were still not entitled to these benefits. Czeferner, Dóra: Polgári-liberális, feminista nőszervezetek és sajtójuk az Osztrák–Magyar Monarchiában (1907–1918). Egyesületek, periodikák, tartalomelemzés [Bourgeois-liberal, feminist women's organisations and their press activity in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1907–1918). Associations, periodicals, content analysis], unpublished dissertation, Pécs 2020, passim.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC

of the entire civil law code (*Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*), which had been in effect since 1811.

One of the best indicators of an association's societal influence and socioeconomic position is the capital at its disposal.[31] Over time, the financial circumstances of the *General Austrian Women's Association* became stable. The largest income items always included membership subscriptions and, prior to 1902, the so-called enrolment fees (*Einschreibegebühr*), which changed only twice over time. Until 1897, the annual membership cost 1 gulden, while the enrolment fee was 25 kreuzer.[32] The membership fees were adjusted for the first time in 1902, when the journal *Neues Frauenleben* (New Women's Life) was launched. Those who ordered the journal in addition to their association membership had to pay 6 crowns, while those who did not subscribe to the journal only had to pay 3 crowns.[33] Donations also formed an important item on the list of income, as did stock market investments and interest payments.[34]

According to Hanna Hacker, the most successful period for the *General Austrian Women's Association* was between 1900 and 1910, i.e. before the death of Auguste Fickert.[35] Considering the sources, I date the beginning of this upswing to 1902 because the establishment of *New Women's Life* was a long-term guarantee for the all-important publicity for the association. The other high point was the planning and realisation of the *Heimhof*, the single-kitchen house (*Einküchenhaus*) of the *General Austrian Women's Association*. This was a reform model of urban housing development in which a centrally managed large kitchen within a multi-apartment building replaced the kitchens of the individual flats. The concept was based on the ideas of the German women's rights activist and social democrat Lily Braun (1865, Halberstadt, Germany–1916, Zehlendorf, Germany) and was adapted in Austria by Auguste Fickert. In order to make this possible, in addition to collecting donations, the *General Austrian Women's Association* made a generous contribution from its own capital. The first appeal to raise the necessary funds was published in May 1909 in *New Women's Life*, while construction work took two years. Fickert did not live to see its completion; the *Heimhof* was opened in October 1911, a year after her death.[36] After 1910, the leading strategies of Fickert's successors, Leopoldine Kulka, Christine Touaillon, and Emil Fickert (1870, Vienna–1957, Vienna), her younger brother, brought a few independent initiatives.

31 A similar indicator was the media strategy of the *General Austrian Women's Association*. Its most important pillar was *Neues Frauenleben* (New Women's Life). Although the association managed to keep the journal alive for 16 years, it required a huge financial effort. For its history, business results, structure, authors, and content analysis, see Czeferner: Kultúrmisszió vagy propaganda?, passim.

32 For this, see the membership lists published with the reports. AÖF, Tätigkeitsbericht 1893–1897.

33 AÖF, Tätigkeitsbericht 1897, p. 3.

34 AÖF, Tätigkeitsbericht 1900, p. 4.

35 Hacker: Gewalt, p. 78.

36 [Anonymous]: Die Vereinsleitung, in: Neues Frauenleben, May 1909, pp. 117–119; Kulka, Leopoldine: Die Eröffnung des Heimhofes, in: Neues Frauenleben, November 1911, pp. 293–296.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

3.2 The National Association of Female Clerks and the Feminists' Association

In this section, as well as outlining the objectives of the Hungarian associations, I will argue that the objectives of the *National Association of Female Clerks* were the most specific: in theory, the *Feminist Association* sought to promote the political, economic and social rights of all women. This was, of course, impossible, if only because upper middle-class women, who made up a large part of the membership, had little information about the problems of, for example, a working woman.

The statutes of the *National Association of Female Clerks* have not survived but a 1909 pamphlet provides information about its aims.[37] As for the *Feminists' Association*, a 1905 publication on its "objectives and work plan" has remained, including the first amendments to its statutes.[38] In the case of the *Feminists' Association*, further changes to its regulations were agreed upon in 1911, three times between 1915 and 1917, and, finally, in 1946. We do not know whether the *National Association of Female Clerks* held any general assemblies to amend its constitution.

Of the three associations, the *National Association of Female Clerks* had the most specific objectives, summed up in a single sentence: "The improvement and advancement of the interests of women office workers in private, state, and other public authorities."[39] Thirteen years after its founding, the association arranged several vocational courses, operated a labour exchange office, and organised "cultural, educational, and entertaining lectures", often in collaboration with the *Feminists' Association*. It provided broad-based consultation and information, maintained its own library like the other two associations, and ran a vacation facility at Balaton Lake or in the Tatra Mountains during the summer months. It took care of welfare for its members who were unable to work and also undertook to "guarantee an assortment of benefits", meaning free train tickets, tickets for the baths, and discounts in a variety of shops. In order to increase the intensity of communication with members and potential supporters, it published *Woman and Society* together with the *Feminists' Association* beginning in 1907 and announced its intention to mobilise female office workers in the provinces.[40] According to the *Feminists' Association*'s work plan published in 1905, their objectives encompassed every aspect of women's lives, i.e. they aimed to support women's rights in family life, education, motherhood, the labour market, civil rights, politics, and prostitution.[41]

After 1907, the enrolment fee in the *National Association of Female Clerks* was 2 crowns. In addition, full members had to pay 12 crowns per year, supporting members 6 crowns, and members from the provinces 8 crowns, each in quarterly instalments. Despite general price increases, these fees remained unchanged until 1914. The reason for this could be that the strategy of both the *National Association of Female Clerks* and the *General Austrian Women's Association* was not to increase the fees in order to not lose members. In contrast,

37 NOE: A Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete Alapszabályai [The Statutes of the Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete], Budapest 1909, pp. 1–3.

38 MNL OL, P999, Box 1, Item 1/a, Amendment to the Statutes of the Feminists' Association in 1905.

39 Translated by the author.

40 NOE: A Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete Alapszabályai, pp. 1–3.

41 Feminists' Association, Report 1905, pp. 3–4.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-NC

the *Feminists' Association* increased membership fees five times. Between 1907 and 1911, "full members pay a membership fee of at least 6 crowns a year in twice-yearly instalments paid in advance".[42] In 1908, the leadership of the *Feminists' Association* legitimised the increase in dues with the argument that this amount was less than the membership fee "customary for associations for working women in Hungary", which was 10.40 crowns per year.[43]

Furthermore, according to the 1911 amendment of the statutes, at least 10 crowns a year were expected from full members, while supporting members, in line with previous practice, were asked to pay 200 crowns as a lifetime subscription.[44] From 1915 to 1917, full members contributed 12 crowns annually to the budget; from December 1917 to the end of 1918, the fee increased to 16 crowns; later, it was 26 crowns. The membership fee for supporting members rose proportionally, from 250 to 1,000 crowns. For those in financial need, the *Feminists' Association* offered a more favourable payment arrangement than the *General Austrian Women's Association* in 1917.[45]

From the mid-1900s on, the annual income of the Hungarian associations far exceeded that of the *General Austrian Women's Association*. The operation of their official organ, *Women and Society* (similar to *New Women's Life*), was a significant financial burden. Nevertheless, the Hungarian associations managed to use their financial resources to build up the organisational structure (e.g. career advisers, wartime committees to protect mothers and children) not only in Budapest but also in the provinces. Members of the Hungarian associations were also able to attend different courses. The subjects taught were quite varied: while, like the *General Austrian Women's Association*, they repeatedly started courses on social education and women's health, the most popular ones were those for beginners and advanced learners of German, English, and French. After the outbreak of World War I, the repertoire was expanded to include free courses for currently unemployed members for training or retraining.[46] In addition, the associations saw it as an important mission to popularise a healthy lifestyle and outdoor sports. They organised expeditions and hiking trips,[47] rented tennis courts, and held courses in Swedish gymnastics, a popular sport at the time. In their radicalism, both Hungarian organisations approached the *General Austrian Women's Association* after their establishment, but soon realising that this approach would lose them a significant number of supporters, they refined their tone.

---

42 Translated by the author.

43 Translated by the author. Glücklich, Vilma: Feministák Egyesülete [Feminists' Association], in: A Nő és a Társadalom [Woman and Society], February 1908, p. 32.

44 MNL OL, P999, Box 1, Item 1/a, Constitutional amendments of the Feminists' Association from 1905 and 1911.

45 MNL OL, P999, Box 2, Item 3, Minutes of the Committee Meeting of the Feminists' Association on 25 October 1915 and the General Assembly of 22 December 1918. 1917 amendment to the Statutes of the Feminists' Association.

46 On the training and retraining courses, see, e.g. Gergely, Janka: A Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyeüslete [National Association of Female Clerks], in: A Nő. Feminista Folyóirat [The Woman. Feminist Journal], September 1914, p. 3.

47 On this, see e.g. Glücklich, Vilma: Feministák Egyesülete [Feminists' Association], in: A Nő és a Társadalom [Woman and Society], July 1907, p. 125.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access -

4. Membership of the organisations

In this part of the paper, I survey the changing number of members and the social composition of the associations from the time of their establishment. Because I considered it essential to reconstruct the operation of the associations in the course of longer processes, I have outlined the development of membership figures according to this principle. The data for the years 1893 to 1900 suggest that in the first stage of its operation, the *General Austrian Women's Association* attracted approximately 200 people, which can be interpreted as a relatively high number if the radical approaches of the association are taken into account; in 1896, the number of members was over 300. In 1898, there was a marked and unexplained decline: 101 full members left the association, so the total number of members dropped from 385 to 284.[48] These sizeable fluctuations remained typical later on as well.

The stagnation and decline in membership numbers were disappointing for Auguste Fickert. At the annual general meeting in 1895, she tried to compensate for the failed attempts to recruit new members by setting new targets for the following years. According to her, high membership numbers could not be the right measure of their success.[49] Between 1900 and 1904, no document mentions membership numbers, and sources are also limited for the years that followed. From 1911 on, there are no sources at all. Although the journal *New Women's Life* offers no clues, the fact that Leopoldine Kulka was still quoting Fickert's credo on increasing membership as late as 1918 suggests that there were never crowds joining the association.[50] Naturally, some members only paid the membership fee and did not participate in the meetings or activism, but the total membership never exceeded 1,000.[51]

In order to answer the question about the social basis of the *General Austrian Women's Association*, it is worthwhile to examine from which districts of Vienna its members came. It is possible to compile such a list of figures from 1897 onwards. The distribution of the 262 full female members from this year can be seen in the first diagram below. In this diagram, districts 1–9 represent the central area of Vienna. The first district (Innere Stadt) is right next to the Danube Canal, with the institutions of the central administration and the palaces of aristocratic families. The second district (Leopoldstadt) is located on the island between the Danube and the Danube Canal, with a significant Jewish population. The 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th districts were parts of the wider city centre with a significant bourgeois population. I assumed that women from the 9th (Alsergrund) and 18th (Währing) districts would be overrepresented since that was where the association and most of its events were held. However, this was not confirmed: only 63 people came from these districts. A significant proportion of members (107 people, i.e. 40.8 % of the Viennese full female membership) came from the 1st, 2nd, and 9th districts. Twenty-

48 AÖF, Tätigkeitsbericht 1898.

49 AÖF, Tätigkeitsbericht 1895, p. 6.

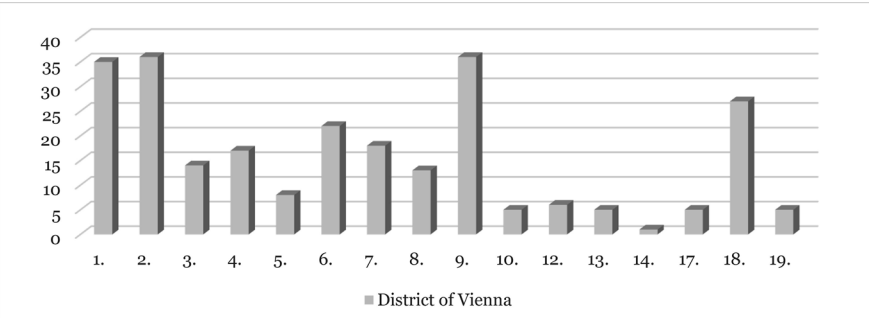
50 [Anonymous]: Fünfundzwanzig Jahre Allgemeiner Österreichischer Frauenverein, in: Neues Frauenleben, April–May 1918, pp. 57–60.

51 Czeferner: Kultúrmisszió vagy propaganda?, pp. 74–82.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

seven women joined from Währing and another 27 members came from the city's outskirts. Finally, five were from the 10th district (Favoriten), Vienna's largest working-class district at the turn of the century.

Diagram 1: Distribution of full members of the General Austrian Women's Association (262 persons) living in Vienna in 1897 by district.[52]



The strength of the *General Austrian Women's Association* and the nature of its activism were significantly influenced by the size of its membership, its social composition, and the generational conflicts that increasingly created fault lines within the organisation. It is important, however, that the board was able to unite and act as one throughout the association's existence in order to achieve certain goals. The most striking evidence of this, alongside the constant publication of *Neues Frauenleben*, is the *Heimhof* and the fact that the association once again fought its way back into the international arena of the women's movement after 1914, where it also took up important positions, which will be discussed later in greater detail.

The membership figures of the Hungarian associations were reconstructed from their annual reports. In 1907, the *National Association of Female Clerks* had more than 1,000 members; in 1913, it had more than 3,500. In 1914, the total number of members in Budapest and the provinces was 3,933, three times larger than that of the *Feminists' Association* in that period.

Concerning the *Feminists' Association*, the minutes and logbooks kept from 1912 onwards provide an accurate picture of the membership figures entered month by month until 1918. Compared to the 319 members in 1906, the number of members in Budapest and the provinces had almost quadrupled by 1914, proving the growing influence of the association. By 1907, membership had reached the 500 mark; by 1912, it had reached 1,000. The *Feminists' Association* was not faced with the fluctuation experienced by the *General Austrian Women's Association* and the *National Association of Female Clerks*, as only a handful of its members resigned from their membership. The highest number of resignations was 17 in September 1910.

Between 1914 and the summer of 1918, membership jumped from 1,978 to 5,312. One explanation for this could be the electoral reform initiated by Vilmos Vázsonyi (1868,

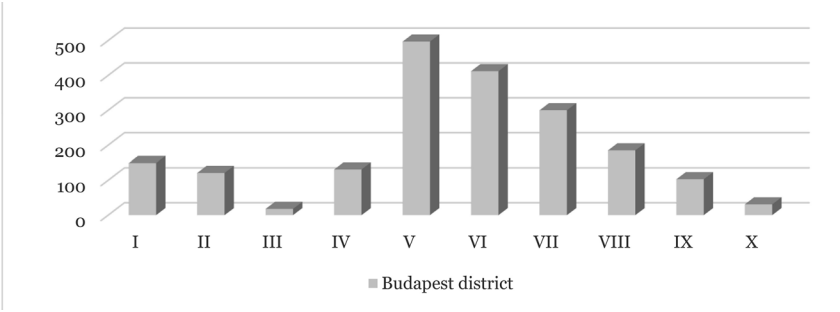
52 AÖF Tätigkeitsberichte (1893–1910).

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

Sümeg–1926, Baden bei Wien), a liberal-bourgeois-democratic politician and minister of justice, as well as the creation of the national councils in Budapest and the provinces, which could have mobilised many of the supporters of women's suffrage. Thanks to electoral reform, a certain part of the Hungarian female population could have been given the right to vote for the first time. Ultimately, the proposal was rejected by Parliament in the summer of 1918.

The second diagram shows that most of Budapest's members of the *Feminists' Association* came from the 5th district (Lipótváros, 479 members), the 6th district (Terézváros, 412 members), and the 7th district (Erzsébetváros, 300 members). The metropolitan intelligentsia from these districts and female university students were overrepresented. According to the logbooks, 280 members had a doctorate, while 10 members (both men and women) came from baronial families and five from comital families.

Diagram 2: Distribution of Budapest members of the Feminists' Association according to district around the turn of 1916–1917.[53]



Compared to Vienna, the number of members in what was, strictly speaking, the centre of the city (the 4th district) was modest (131). There were also only a few from the outlying districts with mainly industrial sites: 103 from the 9th district (Ferencváros) and only 31 from the 10th district (Kőbánya).

The number of active members was much higher in the Hungarian associations than in the *General Austrian Women's Association*, where, alongside Auguste Fickert, only few board members were willing (or allowed) to undertake more important roles. That the Hungarian associations proved to be more effective than the Austrian association can be put down to the overlap between their membership and leadership, and also to the specialized committees they brought into being to manage particular issues. The leaders of these committees tended to make the tasks they were entrusted with entirely their own.

53 MNL OL, P999, Box 2, Item 3, Minutes of the Committee Meeting of the Feminists' Association on 20 September 1910.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

5. International embeddedness

It is difficult to study the social influence of women's associations in general, which holds true for the examined three organisations as well. Such investigations are complicated ones: the measure of effectiveness cannot exclusively be based on the membership numbers or the copies of publications printed or sold. It would be a mistake to base conclusions purely on the numbers of those participating in the events and visiting the libraries of women's associations. For a more complex picture, it is vital to reconstruct the network of connections between (leading) members. Thus, I will examine the national and international network of connections of the Austrian and the Hungarian associations, in particular those of Auguste Fickert and Rosika Schwimmer.

Before the First World War, it was common for leading women's rights activists in Central and Western Europe to be well-embedded in the transnational level of women's movements. It was also typical for them to be invited by women's associations from other countries to give lectures. Furthermore, the history of women's movements between the 1880s and 1914 can be described by a series of international congresses. Several thousand women from Europe, North America, and other parts of the world participated in these events, which served as the main venues for networking.[54]

For Auguste Fickert and the *General Austrian Women's Association*, expanding their organisational activities outside Vienna was an unattainable goal. The majority of its members were from the capital; only a few people joined from Germany, South Tyrol, the Czech Lands, or Hungary. In 1896, of the 320 members, 293 (91.6 %) were from Vienna, with a total of just two Hungarian women, one from Budapest and the other from Szolnok. Three women were from Munich, one from Dresden, three from Salzburg, two from Graz, and one each from Bad Ischl, Prague, and Corfu.[55] In the medium and longer term, this tendency meant that the *General Austrian Women's Association* failed to set up a single provincial branch. There is no evidence that Fickert or any other members visited any provincial centres to promote the very activism that was part of their original aims.

In the following, it will be examined how the organisation participated in the activities of the international women's movement and how its foreign relations developed. The following periods can be distinguished in the dynamics of these relations: the first extends from 1893 until the separation from the *Federation of Austrian Women's Associations* in 1906.[56] The *General Austrian Women's Association* joined the *Federation of Austrian Women's Associations* in 1902, immediately after its establishment as its auxiliary organisation. At the time, Auguste Fickert insisted that a member of the *General Austrian Women's Association* be delegated to the board of the *Federation of Austrian Women's Associations*. Meanwhile, she published articles criticising the *Federation of Austrian Women's Associations* in *New Women's Life*.

54 See Gehmacher, Johanna: Reisende in Sachen Frauenbewegung. Käthe Schirmacher zwischen Internationalismus und nationaler Identifikation, in: Ariadne. Forum für Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte 22 (2011), pp. 58–64.

55 AÖF, Tätigkeitsbericht 1896.

56 For more details, see Hacker: Gewalt, pp. 107–112.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

The conflict between the umbrella organisation and the *General Austrian Women's Association* finally came to a head in 1906 due to a dispute over the organisation of female clerks. Consequently, the *General Austrian Women's Association* left the *Federation of Austrian Women's Associations* in 1906 and lost 24 members, including several board members.[57] By breaking off from the *Federation of Austrian Women's Associations*, the *General Austrian Women's Association* isolated itself from valuable foreign connections. After 1906, it no longer had any formal connection with either the *International Council of Women* or the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance*.

Independent of the *Federation of Austrian Women's Associations*, the primary focus of international relations for the *General Austrian Women's Association* was the German Empire. Fickert maintained friendly relations with Auguste Schmidt (1833, Breslau–1902, Leipzig) and Louise Otto-Peters (1819, Meißen–1895, Leipzig), the founding members and leaders of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein* (General German Women's Association, 1865–1933, 1947–, Leipzig), which was first and foremost one of the most important bourgeois-liberal women's organisations in the German Empire. She was also in close contact with Marie Raschke (1850, Gaffert, Stolp County, today Poland–1935, Berlin), who played a leading role in establishing institutional protection of German women's legal rights. Fickert corresponded with her in 1893 about the Viennese women's legal rights organisation.[58] Fickert also corresponded with Anita Augspurg (1857, Verden, Germany–1943, Zürich) and Minna Cauer (1841, Freyenstein, Germany–1922, Berlin), two leading activists of the radical feminist movement in the German Empire and pacifists.[59]

Further international connections were forged with activists in northern European countries through Maikki Friberg (1861, Kankaanpää, Finland–1927, Helsinki), the leader of the Finnish feminist movement. The importance of the Finnish model was also discussed in *New Women's Life*. Fickert exchanged numerous letters with Alexandra Gripenberg (1857, Kurkijoki, Finland–1913, Helsinki), a leading Finnish women's rights activist with many Hungarian connections as well –, with Ellen Key (1849, Västervik, Sweden–1926, Ödeshög, Sweden), a Swedish feminist and reform pedagogue, the Swedish literary Nobel prizewinner Selma Lagerlöf (1858, Mårbacka, Sweden–1940, Mårbacka, Sweden), and with the Dutch physician and women's suffrage activist Aletta Jacobs who visited both Vienna and Budapest in 1906.

While before 1914 the personal contacts of the association's leaders, and Fickert in particular, determined the direction of the *General Austrian Women's Association's* international embeddedness, it effectively emerged as a group on the international arena after

57 According to Christa Hämmerle, the *Federation of Austrian Women's Associations* had 80 auxiliary associations in 1914, while Irene Bandhauer-Schöffmann counts 74. Hämmerle, Christa: Heimat/Front. Geschlechtergeschichte/n des Ersten Weltkriegs in Österreich-Ungarn, Wien 2014, p. 85; Bandhauer-Schöffmann, Irene: Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung im Austrofaschismus. Eine Studie zur Krise des Geschlechterverhältnisses am Beispiel des Bundes Österreichischer Frauenvereine und der Katholischen Frauenorganisation für die Erzdiözese Wien, unveröffentlichte Dissertation, Wien 1986, p. 1.

58 WR NF, H.I.N. 70943/1.

59 E.g. WR NF, H.I.N. 69775, Card from Anita Augspurg to Auguste Fickert, 9 June 1902.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

the outbreak of the First World War. Of course, they were building on the network of contacts established by their late president, but the members of the board were more eager to expand their foreign contacts each year.

The operation and development of the *National Association of Female Clerks* and the *Feminists' Association* can only be understood by looking at their activities on the provincial and transnational levels. After 1906, they worked intensively together to strengthen activism outside Budapest. In the fall of 1907, after the creation of the women's office workers' associations in Pécs and Nagyvárad (today Oradea, Romania), Rosika Schwimmer stated, "[…] our movement is not worth anything as long as the other women in our country are not yet in our camp".[60] Between 1907 and 1909, other local auxiliaries of the two associations were created in Debrecen, Temesvár (today Timișoara, Romania), Szombathely, and Arad (today Romania).

In the summer of 1908, steps were taken to establish an association in Pressburg (today Bratislava, Slovakia), but it is not known whether this enterprise proved successful. The following groups operated as auxiliaries of the *Feminists' Association*: Szabadka (today Subotica, Serbia), Szeged, and Vágújhely (Vilma Glücklich's hometown). There was also intense activism in the spa towns of Upper Hungary, i.e. Pöstyén (today Piešťany, Slovakia), Tátrafüred (today Starý Smokovec, Slovakia), and Trencsénteplic (today Trenčianske Teplice, Slovakia).

Thanks to its direct connection to the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance*, the *Feminists' Association* was much more involved in the international movement than the *National Association of Female Clerks*. The *Feminists' Association* became a full member of the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance* at the 1906 Copenhagen Congress, together with Austria, Canada, Denmark, Italy, Norway, and Russia.[61] Until Rosika Schwimmer emigrated to the United States in 1921, she was among the delegates of the *Feminists' Association* at every *International Woman Suffrage Alliance* congress.

Schwimmer, the driving force behind the international embeddedness and successful networking strategy of the *Feminists' Association*, had been working to build an international network of contacts even before the association became an auxiliary of the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance*.[62] The first signs of this can be observed in May and June 1901, when Schwimmer established contact with the *Kaufmännischer Hilfsverein für weibliche Angestellte* (Commercial Aid Association for Female Employees, 1894–, Leipzig) in Germany and with Marie Lang (1858, Vienna–1934, Altmünster, Austria). Lang was a board member of the *General Austrian Women's Association* at the time and edited *Dokumente der Frauen* (Women's Documents), the first official organ of the *General Austrian Women's Association*. She did this together with Auguste Fickert and Rosa Mayreder (1858,

60 Translated by the author. MNL OL, P999, Box 2, Item 3, Minutes of the Committee Meeting of the Feminists' Association of 25 October 1907.

61 Rupp, Leila J.: Constructing Internationalism. The Case of Transnational Women's Organizations. 1888–1945, in: The American Historical Review 99 (1994), pp. 1571–1600.

62 Cf. Zimmermann, Susan: Hogyan lettek feministák? Gárdos Mariska és Schwimmer Rózsika a századforduló Magyarországán, in: Eszmélet 7/32 (1996), pp. 57–92; Zimmermann, Susan: Wie sie Feministinnen wurden. Wege in die Frauenbewegung im Zentraleuropa der Jahrhundertwende, in: L'Homme. Europäische Zeitschrift für Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft 8 (1997), pp. 272–306.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

Vienna–1938, Vienna), an Austrian feminist activist, pacifist, writer, and painter. It was in this journal that Schwimmer published her articles for the first time outside Hungary.[63]

In the initial period after the founding of the *Feminists' Association*, the majority of Schwimmer's international contacts were established with Austrian and German organisations and women's rights activists. This can be explained by Schwimmer's limited knowledge of English. She worked hard to overcome this deficiency, and by the end of the 1900s, she was able to communicate in English without difficulty. Her correspondence before 1910 mainly includes letters from Vienna, Berlin, and the bastion of the German bourgeois women's movement, Leipzig. Schwimmer's networking strategies were similar to the communication strategies of other women in similar positions but she had to face one more difficulty besides her lack of English skills. She belonged to a younger generation than most of the leading activists of the women's movement abroad, which sometimes made it difficult to deepen relationships and, in other cases, led to conflicts.

From the German Empire, Schwimmer corresponded with the leaders of the radical wing of the bourgeois women's movement, namely Anita Augspurg, Alice Salomon (1872, Berlin–1948, New York), Käthe Schirmacher (1865, Danzig, today Gdańsk, Poland–1930, Merano, today Italy), and Helene Stöcker (1869, Elberfeld, Germany–1943, New York).[64] There are particularly warm words written to her by Adele Schreiber (1872, Vienna–1957, Herrliberg, Switzerland) and Marie Stritt (1855, Segesvár, today Sighișoara, Romania–1928, Dresden). In Vienna, she initially established cordial relations with Auguste Fickert, Leopoldine Kulka, and Marie Lang and later added Marianne Hainisch to the list. In 1908, she had a disagreement with Fickert when she could hardly recognise the article she had submitted to *New Women's Life*. As was her habit, Fickert had failed to inform Schwimmer of the edits that had been made, which, incidentally, was common practice at the time. After this incident, their relationship became frosty. As a result of this network building, a growing number of Austrian and German journals published articles by Schwimmer.[65]

In the early 1910s, three main directions could be observed in the international relationships of the *Feminists' Association*. In the first direction, it maintained its traditionally close relations with the German and Austrian associations, as well as a few Swiss associations. These were primarily legal aid services for women or associations of professional groups, i.e. teachers, office workers, employees in commerce, actors, singers, journalists, and restaurant staff.

The second main direction of international relationships was formed through the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance*, in which, alongside contacts with British and U.S. organisations, the Dutch and other northern European associations became the most important. In this direction, contacts were made with women's organisations in the Russian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, China, Iceland, and Australia, which joined the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance* at the beginning of the 1910s.

63 NYPL RSP I. Box 2, Letter from Marie Lang to Rosika Schwimmer, 17 July 1901.

64 NYPL RSP I. Box 2–6.

65 NYPL RSP I.A. Boxes 1–11; for the articles, see NYPL RSP II.A. Box 466, fol. 10; Box 467, fol. 1–3.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

The third and less significant direction concerned southern European, South African, and South American countries that were on the periphery of the women's movement and with which the *Feminists' Association* came into contact in the course of organising the 7th Congress of the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance* in Budapest in 1913.[66] After 1914, the deepening relationships with the peace movement must be mentioned. Thus, geography determined the intensity of activists in the German and Austrian networks compared to the Anglo-American networks.

The international relations of the *Feminists' Association* and through it the *National Association of Female Clerks* were thus inseparable from Schwimmer and her personality. Over the years, she became one of the faces not only of the Hungarian but also of the international activism, which she tried to put to good use during the years of the First World War. In addition to her, Vilma Glücklich, who was secretary general of the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* from 1922 to 1925, became a respected figure on the international arena as the years progressed. It is very telling about the women's movement in Hungary that after 1925 there was no Hungarian leader of any of these international associations.

6. Wartime (in)activity of the organisations

The outbreak of World War I was a turning point in the development of the Austro-Hungarian and the international women's movement. As I discussed, prior to August 1914 the associations used public activism, demonstrations, gatherings, posters and leaflets to attempt to draw society's attention to how there could be no further delay in achieving equal rights for women. This changed entirely in the last days of July 1914.

It might seem that the *General Austrian Women's Association* was completely passive at the outbreak of World War I, as it did not take part in almost any relief activities coordinated by women's associations, especially between 1914 and 1916. At the same time, as I have said, its pacifist aspirations were even more intense than before. In other words, a very intense and innovative pacifist movement was developing within the association, one that avoided all activities aimed at preventing economic and social collapse on the home front.

As I have mentioned, the *General Austrian Women's Association* did not actively engage in relief work. Its members became, in many respects, passive observers of events and tended to fight for women's rights mainly theoretically, i.e. on paper in the issues of *New Women's Life* and in words. The *Feminists' Association* (and the *National Association of Female Clerks* to some extent) decided to reconcile their roles in the international women's and peace movement with relief work on the home front, similar to the Austrian relief organ-

66 These countries joined the international women's movement in the course of 1913–1914. Rupp, Leila J.: Worlds of Women. The Making of an International Women's Movement, New Jersey 1997, pp. 16–18 and 74.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

isations of the *Federation of Austrian Women's Associations* and the *Nationaler Frauendienst* in Germany.[67]

While the Hungarian associations temporarily removed the fight for women's suffrage from their agenda by the first days of August 1914, the *General Austrian Women's Association* did not. Nevertheless, the issue of suffrage was gradually taken up again as an objective of the Hungarian associations from the summer of 1915 onwards.[68] From the first days of mobilisation, they focused on helping women find work and advising them. Although the *Feminists' Association* and the *National Association of Female Clerks* urged an immediate peace settlement from the outset and regarded the situation as "without doubt the ruin of male diplomacy",[69] they also contributed to war work on the home front. Thus, they continued to pursue a variety of political goals related to women's economic and social emancipation.[70]

The *General Austrian Women's Association* published articles in issues of *New Women's Life*, transmitting rather schematic and predictable messages. The explanation for this attitude can again be found in Auguste Fickert's intellectual legacy. Like Rosika Schwimmer, Fickert was a devoted pacifist, so the association she led held similar values, even after her death. Thus, from August 1914 on, Leopoldine Kulka and her associates consistently proclaimed to the members and readers of *New Women's Life* that the war, which men had started, was pointless and that the slaughter had to be stopped as soon as possible. Although Rosa Mayreder resigned from the leadership of the *General Austrian Women's Association* as early as 1903 and devoted all her time to building her career as a writer, she too espoused the values of the association, seeing the war and, a few years later, the collapse of the Dual Monarchy as a failure of male dominance and patriarchal values.[71]

The *General Austrian Women's Association* was often accused of being anti-national. Actually, national sentiments within the association did not disappear, and this is not only because the leadership did not wish or dare to deviate from the reference points established by Fickert. The fact that the association was willing to address the issue of women's frontline work is evidence of this. In 1916–1917, members paid close attention to lectures given in Vienna by activists visiting from abroad, such as Vilma Glücklich.[72] On the other hand, the association became more intensely involved in the international peace movement. Harriet Anderson argues that while the *Federation of Austrian Women's Associations* increasingly turned its back on supranational initiatives in this regard and became more introspective, it was the *General Austrian Women's Association* that "became open to inter-

67 The *National Association of Female Clerks* and the *Feminists' Association* regularly reported on their activities on the home front in *A Nő. Feminista Folyóirat* [The Woman. Feminist Journal].

68 E.g. [Anonymous]: Feministák Egyesülete [Feminists' Association], in: A Nő. Feminista Folyóirat [The Woman. Feminist Journal], July 1915, p. 108.

69 [Anonymous]: A Feministák Szegedi Egyesületének Éves Jelentése [Annual Report of the Szeged Association of Feminists], in: A Nő. Feminista Folyóirat [The Woman. Feminist Journal], May 1916, p. 76.

70 For the interpretation of women's economic and social rights as political rights, cf. Judson: Die unpolitische Bürgerin, pp. 337–345.

71 Schmölzer, Hilde: Rosa Mayreder. Ein Leben zwischen Utopie und Wirklichkeit, Wien 2002, p. 130.

72 AÖF 1917, p. 1.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

nationalism".[73] And although, apart from newspaper reports, only Rosika Schwimmer's and Leopoldine Kulka's correspondence[74] and Schwimmer's diary notes have been preserved, the *General Austrian Women's Association* seems to have opened itself intensively to the international women's and peace movements, as in the years 1915 to 1918.

From October 1914 on, *New Women's Life* reported on Schwimmer's U.S. lecture tour and the peace talks she held. From 18 April to 1 May 1915, six Austrian delegates participated in the founding congress of the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* in The Hague, including Leopoldine Kulka and several other women from the circles of the *General Austrian Women's Association*. In 1917, a branch called *Friedenspartei* (Peace Party) was founded within the *General Austrian Women's Association*. In the spirit of these events, from the beginning of 1917, a number of assemblies with the social democratic women's groups were organised to sign a peace treaty as soon as possible. They did so despite continuing wartime regulations aimed at restricting freedom of speech and banning public demonstrations. The number of demonstrations in Vienna increased rapidly due to the famine, the domestic political crisis, and the untenable economic shortage in the winter of 1916–1917, but also because of corruption. One of the largest demonstrations was held in Vienna on 19 January 1918, in which all branches of the women's movement participated.[75]

In what follows, I illustrate the somewhat ambivalent attitude of the Hungarian associations towards the war and their wartime work on the home front. I argue that the associations were active on two fronts during the war: on the one hand, they were active in the hinterland in helping women and their children in need, and on the other, they were active in the international arena, working through the *International Woman Suffrage Alliance* and the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* to bring about peace as soon as possible.

After the war began, the declared goal of the Hungarian associations was to prevent economic collapse on the home front, in line with their original aims of promoting women's emancipation in the labour market. They made efforts not only to help women who were forced to join the workforce by necessity but also to find employment for women who had lost their jobs due to the deteriorating economic situation. For example, immediately after the outbreak of war, many female office workers lost their jobs, and, as in Western Europe, many workers in the textile and food industries were also fired. Given the aims of the association, the attention of the *National Association of Female Clerks* was focused on finding jobs for female clerks; all other areas of employment were the responsibility of the *Feminists' Association*.[76]

---

73 Anderson: Utopian Feminism, p. 192.

74 After 1914, their letters focused exclusively on the peace movement. MNL OL, P999, Box 18, 15. No., pp. 160–162, Letters from Leopoldine Kulka to Rosika Schwimmer.

75 Hauch, Gabriella: Sisters and Comrades. Women's Movements and the "Austrian Revolution". Gender in Insurrection, the Räte Movement, Parties and Parliament, in: Ingrid Sharp/Matthew Stibbe (eds.), Aftermaths of War. Women's Movements and Female Activists, 1918–1923, Leiden 2011, pp. 221–243. Cf. Fürth, Henriette: Die Wirkungen des Krieges auf das Frauenwahlrecht, in: Neues Frauenleben, January–February 1918, pp. 1–7.

76 MNL OL, P999, Box 2, Item 3, Minutes of the Committee Meeting of the Feminists' Association held on 19 October 1914.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

Under the banner of "wartime assistance for mothers", members of the *Feminists' Association* both in Budapest and the provinces helped mothers who carried the parental duties alone and were unable to work. They supported women in their childcare duties and held "peace-loving" storytelling afternoons for children. In principle, they were willing to help with domestic servants' problems (accommodation, professional training, and contracts), but this help was limited in practice. They managed communal gardening plots and provided instructions on preserving fruit and vegetables. Concerning the wartime role of the *General Austrian Women's Association*, the Hungarians only reported on the association's 1915 petition in defence of victims of sexual violence. In the submission, published verbatim in *The Woman*, the Austrian association asked the Ministry of Justice to allow women who had been raped by enemy soldiers to terminate their pregnancies.[77] The *National Association of Female Clerks* and especially the *Feminists' Association* were intensively supported by the government, the city of Budapest and the provincial authorities, which gave them a high profile and contributed to a strong increase in their membership.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined the development of the most important bourgeois-liberal and feminist associations in Austria and Hungary from their establishment until the end of the First World War. This is the period starting at the end of the 19th century when they began to struggle intensely for the political representation of their own gender but did not yet have the right to vote. Moreover, women had to contend with a large section of male-dominated public opinion that considered women unfit to exercise any kind of political agency.

I have presented some aspects of how a small group of (upper) middle-class women, living primarily in the two capital cities of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, were able to transcend the traditionally gendered spheres of the 19th century between public and private and how they endeavoured to engage in the political discourse of the era. The wide range of activities (e.g. public meetings, official bodies) pursued by the organisations studied here provided an appropriate framework for exercising their agency as well as for sharing their political ideas at both the national and international levels.

The analysis was conducted from a comparative and partly transnational perspective. I have shown that the Viennese and Budapest associations, which share several common features, worked according to almost the same working methods before 1918. I have discussed that the political agency of the *General Austrian Women's Association* after its foundation had fermenting effects on the *National Association of Female Clerks* and the *Feminists' Association*, but I have also highlighted that the activities of the Hungarian associations had become more effective by 1914.

I was able to prove that there was a significant transfer of knowledge between Austrian and Hungarian associations, which was ensured by the personal contacts of their

77 [Anonymous]: Osztrák és német asszonyok a háborús erőszak áldozataiért [Austrian and German women for victims of war violence], in: A Nő. Feminista Folyóirat [The Woman. Feminist Journal], August 1915, pp. 122–123.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

leaders and board members. This research result contradicts the nationalist perspective of Hungarian theoretical literature. Also, it demonstrates that the *National Association of Female Clerks* and the *Feminists' Association* did not imitate the patterns of the political agency of the women's movements in Western European countries and the United States but were oriented towards Austrian associations. In addition to the history of the three associations, this article provides insights into their strong embeddedness in transnational women's and peace movements. The activists' correspondence and the associations' press activity revealed similarities and differences in how the board members communicated with their followers.

Although the scope of the organisations studied remained limited in many respects, the political course of action they pursued can be seen as successful overall, especially when considering that the social democratic and Christian socialist women's organisations worked with the institutional support of male-dominated political parties, while the bourgeois-liberal feminist groups acted alone, independent of political parties.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839472316-007 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA